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Summoned Slaughter II

Summoned Slaughterer
(呼び出された殺戮者)
Volume 02
Let's enjoy ourselves at the Border

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Story Description:

Touno Hifumi was summoned to another world, to be a Hero for a kingdom. Unbeknownst to the summoners, he's a kill-happy person who restrained his killer instincts with martial arts. Upon arrival he slaughter various knights and the mastermind of the event, the King. Unwilling to oppose this strong killer, the Princess let him go free. Thus start the fun life of travelling the world, unrestraintly killing any who attempt to kill him.

But first, lets purchase a pair of female slaves.

Original Story can be found here:
Link

Chapter 15: Don't Lie

Two women rode on a 2-horse drawn carriage, while a young man trailed behind them on a large horse. This irregular group approached a checkpoint in the Imperial Capital.

The stationed soldiers went around to the rear of the carriage in order to check its contents.

「Hey.」

The horse mounted man called out to them.

The soldier was indignant at being

casually called out by the mounted man. But on the off chance that he was an arrogant noble, it may become troublesome, so he endured it.

「What is it?」

「Is it still necessary to verify even with this official document?」

The mounted man unfurled and displayed a piece of paper rarely seen at a checkpoint. Thus the soldier realized the gravity of the situation.

「Proof of Trade of Aqua Sapphire..... 」

「It's in the crate inside the carriage. Confirm it.」

「Un, understood」

The soldier opened the crate, finding an aqua sapphire clearly packed in a cushion of wood shavings, with a magnificent cut for a finishing touch. Of all the aqua sapphires he'd seen up until now, he'd understood just by glancing at it, that this was a particularly high class item.

He confirmed that it does not differ in size or shape from what is described in the document, he then closed the crate and secured the lock tightly.

「Confirmation complete. Other luggage is only provisions for travel. I need to hear it just to be sure, what's your destination?」

The soldier jotted down his signature on the memo using charcoal. questioning them while returning the official document. The man on the horse smiled from ear to ear as he took out a new document to show to him.

「Just the neighboring country. Here is the permission.」

A document indicating free ingoing and outgoing passage from this country was shown to the soldier, it clearly shows the signature of Princess Imeraria. Also attached is a medal indicating a noble rank.

「Please forgive me! By all means please pass.」

「 You don't have to mind it. Its a

thorough job anyway. 」

「 Thank you very much! 」

As soldiers stood at attention to send the party off, the carriage began to advance while the young man continued following behind it.

After the carriage left their sight, the men let out a breath of relief.

「 ……Was there such a noble? 」

「 That document has Imeraria-sama's signature, and the name Hifumi Touno is rather unusual. By chance is he the rumored "Slender Sword Knight" ? 」

「 I see, the rumored newcomer that Imeraria-sama favors. 」

The “Slender Sword Knight” which the soldiers were talking about was Hifumi’s nickname, the man riding on the horse with haughty attitude was definitely Hifumi, how the nickname came to be, he hadn’t the foggiest.

A certain female guild staff member whimsically coined it, and due to the speed of Hifumi’s hunting and the impact of that first event, it had spread in the blink of an eye.

Before the nickname started spreading, Hifumi was busy preparing for the journey, so he hadn’t returned to the guild. Thus the nickname never reached his ears.

In the future Hifumi will become

aware of it and it will become an established fact, but that's a story for another time.

「 Trying to behave and act like a noble sure is troublesome. 」

「 Considering all that, why do I feel that you've already mastered it? 」

Having completely left the vicinity of the Royal Capital, Hifumi quickly stowed the carriage into the Dark Hole's Storage.

Now everyone is riding their own horses and are galloping like the wind .

「 No, this kind of haughty attitude, roughly speaking, I dislike it. Though I pretended to have the nobles' attitude, it doesn't feel too

good.」

「Master, what are you saying this late in the game.....」

As far as Hifumi was concerned, nobles seemed to be showing off what they had without making any effort solely due to their lineage. The reason for this seemed to be the wildly different leadership and instruction. The subtle differences were not conveyed to Kasha.

「Master, the road sign ahead on the highway.....」

Origa who was holding a staff and the reins in both hands suddenly called out to Hifumi. All of them slowed down.

Origa didn't talk much all the while

because she was concentrating her magic, she was still not used to using the new magic the she and Hifumi developed together. After they left the Royal Capital and change from carriage to horses, her concentration was always on the staff in her hands.

Being aware of the degree of freedom in practising magic, Hifumi introduced the wind magic capable Origa to the concept of sound being transmitted by air vibrations, using it to detect movements in their surroundings. It was particularly successful in detecting obstacles ahead.

Since only Origa could use the sound wave perception skill, Hifumi did not know precisely how it felt,

but by using a simple string telephone, he roughly explained the mechanics of sound transmittance. Half of the practice time was devoted to the development of this magic.

In spite of it being a still-developing magic, distance, number of obstacles, size, etc. can be determined fairly accurately.

「 There are probably people ahead. Further on the highway..... There are 10 people. 」

「 Just right. 」

The detection wave advances forward for up to one minute making contact with everything within that range. Since Origa was

still incapable of exercising it to such a degree, she decided to practice it more. Incidentally, since Origa requested it to be named, after worrying a lot, it was named as “Echolocation”. Thinking about it, it may be because it was inspired by the sound wave perception that bats use.

Reigning in his horse, Hifumi told Origa and Kasha to dismount and prepare their weapons.

「 First, I will meet them. This close to town, in all probability, those fools are thieves waiting to perform an ambush. There are a considerable number of them. 」

Hifumi drew his katana without descending from his horse. Though

different from a longsword, on horseback, it will not be a problem with thieves as opponents.

「 I will suitably thin their numbers, follow from the back. Lets use this opportunity to refine your close combat skills. Kasha, without fail kill a person with no more than 2 strikes. Origa, you must use the shuriken. 」

「 Roger! 」

「 Understood. 」

Hearing their highly confident responses, Hifumi bent low over his horse and made it gallop.

「Stop ! 」

Five men with weapons in dirty, ill-

fitting clothes blocked the highway on which Hifumi advanced. From their appearance and bloodthirst, he judged them to be thieves.

There seem to be hidden presences on both sides of the highway.

「 Leave your valuables for your life..... Buh?! 」

Leisurely ignoring the speaker, Hifumi rode past the thieves without reducing his speed.

The thief's face split open, as did his carotid artery.

As the thieves uncomprehendingly stared at their companion falling in a spray of blood, Hifumi turned around and charged towards them.

Flusteredly they raised their weapons, too slowly.

This time Hifumi jumped down from the galloping horse while maintaining his momentum, beheaded one of the thieves, as he rolled safely to the ground. The thief's head was completely destroyed during Hifumi's rolling fall.

Two people were killed in a blink of an eye, the remaining three thieves got indecisive.

It was then that 3 people on each side of the highway came to flank them on both sides.

11 people in total huh. 1 unaccounted person was cleverly

hidden, did she overlook it?

While calmly confirming the result of Origa's new magic, Hifumi stowed his sword, and took out a new weapon.

The blade of about 30cm was attached perpendicular to the handle of the weapon, (attached to the other end is a chain with a heavy weight called the fundo at the end of it). It was a Kusarigama.

While Thorn was creating the weapon, a remark of 「I can't imagine how to use this」was made. Hifumi appraised the weapon as very well done. The handle and the size of the blade was good. The length of the chain and the weight of the fundo was per

the specifications.

The sickle was held in the right hand, while the fundo was being spun in the other. This appeared bizarre to the inhabitants of this world.

The thieves weren't able to judge on what kind of weapon the young man was holding because it was strange, because of that they were not able to attack immediately.

「GUA！」

Suddenly, one thief fell down.

Looking at it, you could recognize a shuriken was stuck behind the head.

Origa

Hifumi felt admiration that she practiced skillfully, in addition the thieves were even more confused as another one was cut down. Kasha had sliced off a head in one strike. Also her movements had became more refined that before, her large swings were gone, and her swords were tightly controlled by her skills.

While seeing such growth from the two of them, Hifumi threw the fundo towards one of the thieves who looked away from him and it smashed his skull to pieces.

An arm was cut by Origa's magic and Kasha's sword gave the finishing blow, their coordination was splendid as expected.

The two of them cleaned up the

remaining thieves, from here on out Hifumi needed to think about some guidelines.

All the thieves were killed instantly, the section of the highway was dyed with blood.

「 This is well done. Although I hammered it into you in a short time, you moved pretty well. 」

「 Thank you very much. 」

「 But. 」

Hifumi pointed at one thief who collapsed. There stuck a shuriken in the back of the shabby leather armor.

「 I have dealt a fatal blow to him..... Origa, do you know why

this is bad? 」

「 I hit a section of the armor that the blade of the shuriken wasn't able to penetrate..... I think. 」

Although they were praised and rejoiced for a moment, for Origa their mistake was to be ashamed of, but Hifumi said 「 It is not so 」.

「 You can hit anywhere. Originally, shuriken rarely deal fatal blows. That first piece of shit was just a fluke(where she got a headshot). The problem is, this dickhead wasn't aware a shuriken was stuck to his leather armor 」

Hifumi was observing firmly. This guy was supposed to be panicking, but his mind was occupied with

dealing with Hifumi's movement, so he wasn't able to notice it immediately.

「This was a useless move. Even if you hit the armor, you should hit the front section where they could see. It incites fear, you create an opening for the other person to deal the finishing blow.」

「I see..... I shall devote myself to it.」

「Next is Kasha.」

「Eh, me?」

That excellent fight was thoroughly analyzed, Kasha admired how the others fought, but it was now Kasha's turn to receive some advice.

She thought that she had performed well, but she was surprised that she was called out suddenly.

「Look at your sword. The one you're holding on your right hand. It seems a little bit was chipped off.」

「That's not true! ..... Oh its true. It's chipped a little bit. When was it?」

The fact is she didn't notice at all, Kasha tilted her head to the side while being baffled, Hifumi pointed at another male corpse.

「It was when you stabbed that guy. I can sense that you stabbed him while hitting the bone with too

much force. 」

The thinnest section of the blade is certainly fragile compared to a human bone which is really hard. If you force it to attack at an odd angle, the sword will receive some damage.

「 During stabbing firmly hold the sword sideways , Do not strike the ribs, you need to learn to avoid the middle where the sternum and the spine is located. 」

「 Oh..... but, but my opponent has this odd round body, that's why..... 」

「 If that's the case, cut the face and not the body. That's enough to stop him. 」

The excuse was flatly rejected, Kasha's shoulders drooped, just like Origa's.

Hifumi's actions afterward, as far as Kasha and Origa were concerned, would become their trauma in the future.

「Good, now that we have teaching materials here, I will explain a little bit about the structure of the human body.」

「Eh? Human body's... structure?」

「Teaching materials..... Is it? Don't tell me.....」

「Here we go. At the front of the body is the sternum and here is the spine, these ones here on the sides

are the ribs..... 」

「 Ulp..... Blegh..... 」

「 Uegh!..... Retch..... 」

Hifumi suddenly cut open the body of the thief with a sword, then began to explain the skeletal system. Origa and Kasha started vomiting even before they'd heard the explanation.

Fukaroru, the town that Viscount Hagenti governs.

The town filled with Origa and Kasha's bitter memories.

A horse-drawn carriage approached the entryway from the highway. A young man riding a large horse trailed behind it.

Drawing nearer to the town, Kasha and Origa were made to sit on the coachman's seat of the carriage. They were wearing mantles, hoods low over their eyes, concealing them. Since they they had the appearance of female drivers who do that to avoid sunlight, the soldiers on Fukaroru's checkpost did not think it was unnatural.

「 In various ways, it's good the thieves were already dead..... 」

「 Don't remind me Kasha. I'm putting my mind and heart in order, please talk about something else. 」

Watching their bile rise, as they were still unused to that feeling, Hifumi was subtly worried. While concluding the open air classroom

with an explanation of body parts and the skeletal structure, the two had received serious damage. Primarily the mental kind.

If not for the hoods, two ghastly pale and tearful faces would have been seen while driving the carriage.

If there was a little more flexibility in their attitudes, maybe they would have been able to brace themselves while arriving at their first destination. They felt like vomiting again if they got fired up, and their feelings of not wanting to get up were strong.

Arriving at the entrance of the town, of the two soldiers at the gate, one approached.

If it is not the man that Origa and Kasha recognised, a cough was supposed to be given, Hifumi told them to remain silent if it is the one they remembered..... The cough did not come.

「 Stop. The contents of the carriage are to be verified. 」

「 Understood. Since the cargo of this trip is a wooden box containing an Aqua Sapphire, a signature of confirmation is necessary. 」

Unlike the time at the castle town, Hifumi dismounted, and took out a proof of trade for the Aqua Sapphire.

「 Is this the Aqua Sapphire? Yosh, here's the box. 」

The man opened the box with a strangely practiced hand, unnaturally nodded, closed the wooden box, and signed on the permit.

At that instant, Hifumi kicked the man's abdomen and sent him flying.

「 GUH!? Wh-What are you doing! 」

Quickly approaching the soldier on the ground, Hifumi flipped him while twisting his arm upwards and pinned him to the ground facedown.

To the sudden assault, the other soldier at the gate pulled out his sword in a hurry and ran forwards.

A cough was heard from Origa and Kasha.

「 You bastard! What are you doing! 」

「 Calm down. This is who I am. 」

The soldier running forward was shown the same permit and coin indicating his rank. Hifumi directed his gaze at the soldier on the ground and inspected his torso.

Reluctantly following his gaze, the Aqua Sapphire shone on the soldier's chest.

「 Th-This is..... Guzafan, you! 」

The man caught by Hifumi seemed to be called Guzafan. The other soldier had an expression of not

knowing what to do after the sudden exposure of his colleague's crime.

Putting more power into twisting the soldier's arm, Hifumi asked him in a low voice

「 There was a circulation permit verifying this jewel, the box is closed, there is this fellow's signature. Nevertheless, the Aqua Sapphire has appeared from this fellow's chest..... Well, let's have the explanation. And whether or not "we" understand, let us see... 」

When Guzafan looked up, Origa and Kasha had taken off their hoods. Their faces brimming with anger, he recognised them. Wielding weapons, filled with

strength.

「 Y-You fellows! You were supposed to have fallen into slavery... 」

「 Come now, speak quickly. What's your excuse for deceiving and turning the tender-hearted me into a scary woman? What could it be, I wonder? 」(Kasha)

In contrast to the slaves' anger, Hifumi laughed loudly.

Chapter 16: Viva La Vida

Hifumi quickly tied Guzafan up with a rope and had him loaded into the carriage. Then he asked the remaining soldiers to call the person in charge. Guzafan was thrown in front Origa and Kasha.

「 Origa, this is the shithead that stole the noble's personal property, What kind of punishment will he receive? 」

「 ..... According to the laws of Orson Grande, an arm is expected to be cut off..... 」

「 Although the harm done to us by

the incident with the noble is much worse. His punishment must still be within legal limits.」

As Kasha's words took over Origa's, Guzafan's face turned pale, he looked toward Hifumi for respite.

「 Ple, please forgive me! I was only ordered to..... 」

「 Really, what were the instructions given and who gave them」

「That, that is..... 」

Guzafan couldn't answer. Even if he is not killed by Hifumi, if he gave out the official's name it will be only a matter of time before he is killed by the accomplice.

「You cannot say? Then..... 」

「Please wait! I will say it! Im gonna say it! 」

Speaking honestly might have delayed his disappearance, but not speaking would be certain death. In that case, since it couldn't be helped Guzafan begged for his life with a tear-streaked and disheveled face. Seeing this pathetic figure, Origa and Kasha were somewhat disgusted.

「 Being deceived by such a miserable person..... 」

「 Really. Even the desire to kill has dissipated.... 」

While saying that, the soldier from before ran out of town. Immediately

behind him were a group of about 15 people. Since all of them wore armour similar to Guzafan's, they were probably soldiers of the town.

Seeing them run in their direction, Hifumi instantly noticed something and started running towards the group.

「 Behind! 」

Hearing Hifumi's yell, the soldier turned around, and before he knew it, the backup force behind him had drawn their swords.

「 Eh, what..... 」

Inadvertently halting, the soldier muttered upon seeing his colleagues face someone, not Guzafan, but him.

No, it wasn't his imagination. The eyes of the lead soldier were clearly on him. The lead soldier raised his sword, clearly aiming for him.

「 Uwaaa! 」

「 Dodge it you fool! 」

Hifumi pushed away the soldier that was about to be cut, by a hairs breadth. Lashing out at the lead soldier with a frontal kick, while dodging the swung blade.

However the lead soldier only stumbled a step back and didn't fall down.

「Nuu, stop your resistance！ you thieves！」

The lead soldier intimidates him

and the soldiers surround Hifumi in a line with their swords drawn.

Several people appear to be heading towards Kasha and Origa.

「This piece of shit thief seems to be from your place。 Is your head boiled?」

Hifumi drew his slender katana, and with knit brows, as if spitting out his words:

「 So you're their boss. I knew you couldn't discipline them, but I guess it can't be helped if the one disciplining them is trash, right? Hm? 」

Whether they heard Hifumi's provocation or not, the lead soldier steadies his sword again and says to

his subordinates.

「This man is a noble who swindles, for him to frame and attempt to kill us is foolish! Arrest him on the spot!」

Purposely ignoring it, he yelled out loud so that the surrounding commoners can hear what he's saying. Hifumi thought that this is an explanation. Using "That's how it is" to dispose of inconveniences. It seems this isn't his first offence and he's quite used to it.

When it comes to it, Hifumi had only one choice.

「Understood. It seems talking to you is a waste of time. Come, I'm gonna kill you all together 」

「Don't underestimate me youngster！　Die！」

Once again the lead soldier raised his sword and slashed diagonally from the shoulder, but during the downward slash, a sword struck his left eye. The blade then swept through his brain, and the soldier's long life ended quickly.

「Origa, Kasha! Kill them as I have taught you, do it with all your might!」

Hifumi didn't see if both of the girls reacted to his voice.

Judging that Hifumi was more dangerous than the two women. Besides thelead soldier, the other 10 soldiers surrounded him.

Seeing that the lead soldier was dead, unrest ran through the soldiers, but comprehending that not getting rid of Hifumi would be dangerous, they immediately recovered and rushed at him.

Kasha and Origa have no practice in combat with multiple opponents. There are too many people to start teaching them now...

Although he was thinking that in an easygoing way, Hifumi's movements were quick.

Before the soldiers' attacks arrived, he quickly turned around and swapped places with a suitable person behind him.

「 Gua..! 」

Crammed into the place where Hifumi was before, many blades arced, voices were raised in anguish, and the man died.

Meanwhile moving further, a soldier's head was lopped off, and Hifumi stored his katana.

A kusarigama was taken out.

The chain bound two people together at the neck, pulled them back, and then threw them to the ground.

You could hear the muffled sound of a necks breaking. The two of them died together, the chain was untied without confirming their deaths, and the blade of the sickle cut into a nearby person's neck.

The blood spray was avoided to deal with another opponent, a sword was thrust but the chain wrapped around it and and pulled, snatching it away. The sickle was driven through the opening on the side of the armor, slicing the stomach open with all his might.

The soldier was stunned while staring at his own intestines messily flowing out, and died before he became fully aware of it.

「 Half of them left. No resistance at all. You all aren't even worth killing if you don't persevere a little bit more 」

Hifumi bragged, stating that he was disappointed, all while slashing at another oncoming person. A swipe

at the soldier's leg and the soldier would easily fall, then gently slash the carotid artery with the sickle.

The remaining soldiers were killed brutally. Hifumi, surrounded by dead bodies, turned his focus toward Origa and Kasha.

Those two each have an opponent, but had already defeated them.

Origa prevented them from approaching by hurting them with shurikens, and when their movements became dull, she chanted wind magic to cut their heads off. The accuracy of her magic is rising, and the sharpness seemed to have increased as well.

Conversely, Kasha was fighting

with her 2 swords nearby, she repeatedly attacks the upper body with the right sword and when the opponent blocks her attack she will suddenly stab the opponent's thigh with her left sword causing the opponent to stop on his tracks, then she will deal the killing blow by slicing through the throat.

「 Great, you did well 」

Hifumi was looking around while praising them quickly. The townspeople who were there from the beginning were afraid of being caught up in the fighting, none of them dared to run.

Only Hifumi and the gang survived with Guzafan still tied down and the man who called the group of

soldiers.

The battle was confirmed to be over, the soldier who was unsteadily trying to stand up asked Hifumi for his name and introduced himself as Tamuzu.

「What the hell happened here……」

In front of the dumbfounded Tamuzu, objects that appear to be people were scattered all over the place and the smell of blood permeated the air from the town entrance.

「You still don't know even though you were watching from a special seat?　Guzafan is a fool who rummages through travelers'

luggages, the ones felled here are your colleges, including your boss.
」

Whether he can't admit it or the shock was too big to think of anything Tamuzu could only remain silent.

Hifumi decided to leave it alone because it didn't matter. He stood in front of Guzafan who was terrified from seeing his accomplices completely annihilated.

「You, don't you what's going to happen because of your actions……」

「What's going to happen？　Are the numbers coming going to

double？Is a stronger guy going to appear？　Or are going to say some famous guy is going to appear？」

Without waiting for Guzafan to answer, Hifumi kept rattled on.

「There's too many people like you on their high horses, thinking they are great. Look at those corpses. Can you tell who's your colleague, your boss? Which flesh is your friends'? Which internal organ is your boss'? If a human being is cut, their insides spill out and they die. Kings, knights, and thugs, it's all the same.」

The one listening to Hifumi's words is not only Guzafan. Origa and Kasha were also seriously listening.

「It's the same for you and me, the foundation for every human is the same. The only difference is their appearance, to distinguish them, what they think, and what they do. You guys only thought about doing bad things and were hostile to me. That was all.」

Ignoring Gazufan who was lost for words, Hifumi turned around to face Origa.

「This, understand that these guys are organized when committing the crime. Whether that asshole from before is the mastermind or just the lackey, we will know when we hear it. Therefore.....」

Hifumi kicked Guzafan towards the two slaves

「 If I were in your position, I would kill this guy. Nothing will happen even if you kill him, even the mastermind thought they are nothing, and would execute this guy. Therefore just kill him. 」

This is revenge in the first place as Hifumi said.

And then, staring intently at Origa and Kasha one by one, he told them to make their own decisions.

Kasha was hesitant.

Her way of speaking was coarse and rough, completely opposite to her graceful appearance, and unlike her master Hifumi, she was a girl who could not stay calm after injuring good people.

If attacked by an opponent with weapons, one would naturally kill, since it is impossible to survive without doing so.

Even so, just for being an enemy, killing an enemy, especially one who is not resisting. Just for the sake of revenge, as a person, is it right to kill?

While Kasha was kneading around this question in her head, Origa calmly stood up.

「 ..... Kill him 」

Origa said clearly.

「 Kasha, pulling back now, I have a feeling that we will regret it. We had a hard time in the past. Kill him, if not, someone else will. After

all, if master hadn't taken us at that time, how would we be able to take revenge with our own hands? 」

Though this time, master arranged it, smiled Origa wryly.

That is so, Kasha's head cleared.

「 We will bring down our enemies. 」

Pulling out a single sword, Kasha smiled at Origa.

「 Master, if it's alright, may I borrow master's "Katana"? 」

No magic, realising that Origa wanted to kill with her own hands, Hifumi loosened his sword in the sheath, and pointed it towards Origa, hilt first.

Smoothly, the blade was drawn, light reflecting off its beautiful curve. The atmosphere changed. The fact that it was a tool to deprive life was forgotten.

Reverently receiving the sword, Origa stood awkwardly clasping the katana next to Kasha, looking down at Guzafan rolling underfoot.

「 P-Please sto-.....I believed it was wrong. But after all, it was an order.... 」

「 Shut up. 」

Origa said in a cold voice. Kasha's mouth was drawn tensely.

「 Think of death as salvation. The life of despair that we felt, savouring fear everyday for the agony that is to come. What kind of humiliation would we receive, the anxiousness of how we would die. It's better than living with our minds crushed by the gruesome picture of our future, even if we don't want to think about it. Because if it were possible to die, then that would be the end of it 」

Origa looked at the close friend next to her who finished speaking.

Kasha only nodded once and at the

same time Origa thrust

「Gi~ii..... ！」

Guzafan only grit his teeth without even releasing any sound from the pain, he didn't die immediately.

Their sword damaged Guzafan's femoral artery, an enormous amount of blood flowed out, a little reprieve was given before he died.

「I'll watch the way you die. Look at our faces while you die in regret 」

「We regretted a lot during that time. To have been cheated by you. Therefore this time, you must regret a lot during that time.」

The two of them watched Guzafan's corpse emotionlessly.

Hifumi was silently watching, over looking them fondly, it's like looking at a beautiful, benevolent, and profound holy mother but the comparison was silly.

Guzafan died while muttering that he didn't want to die.

For Origa and Kasha, it was their first taste of revenge.

Origa and Kasha didn't say anything while Hifumi lead them to the dining room.

The time to eat was just approaching, but they did not leave, as Origa and Kasha seemed as though they did not want to move.

They were afraid to enter, since they might be refused entry, but after

proving that they were working for the kingdom, they were reluctantly let in. After showing the medal of nobility, of course.

「 This is bad. 」

While saying so, he gave the shop employee a huge amount of money and told them to bring suitable dishes.

「 How long are you going to be engrossed. You should wake up anytime now 」

「 I'm, I'm deeply sorry 」

「 .....To bask yourselves in a little sentimentality is ok, but... 」

Origa remembered that they were slaves and got flustered, while

Kasha pouted her lips in dissatisfaction. Hifumi thought they were strong women. Having experienced quite a bit of shock, there seemed to be no problem.

「Don't be satisfied with defeating that one person who is at most a piece of shit underling. After this isn't there more people to kill and places to go?」

「.....To kill with reason huh」

「 There should be a suspicious high ranking dipshit behind this, it was bad luck that you had experienced a painful mistake but you had to do it again. 」

Therefore, erasing the hostile guy at the top should be done without

regret. After that, you'll feel better, said Hifumi.

In front of these three, a succession of dishes were lined up one by one.

Though somewhat larger portions and strangely luxurious, it was because the shopkeeper knew Hifumi was a noble and worked harder at preparing the dishes.

In contrast to Origa and Kasha, who didn't have an appetite and were reservedly eating the tender pork sauted style steak and the fresh and crunchy salad, Hifumi simply gulped down his meal and announced his plans.

「 After eating, I will go to Viscount Hagenti's estate and say hello. 」

Upon hearing the plan, only Kasha's ears did not detect the declaration of a new massacre.

Chapter 17: Hail And Kill

Nearby where they were eating, a young man approached Hifumi and co. HE sported clothing resembling a merchant's, with a refreshing smile on his face.

「 Heeey, long time no see! When did you get here? 」

Sitting down next to Hifumi in a friendly manner, he passed him a note unseen by others around.

「 The meal has already ended, huh. There's a cafe nearby, how about it? 」

「 No, that is... 」

Not going along with the man's tension, Hifumi placed the note on the table.

「 There's no need for a performance. There are no suspicious people in the vicinity, so this kind of communication is unnecessary. Moreover, it's meaningless since I can't read. You're from the Third Knight Corps yes? 」

「 Certainly, the memo says he is from the Third Knight Corps. 」

Origa read the memo placed on the table.

As for the man, his smile slipped off, his precautions unnecessary.

「 Uu~, unable to read..... Then how did you notice I was a Knight? 」

「 Knights who receive training in marching walk in a manner different from normal people. 」

He was used to seeing it after Pajou and the others, and understood it immediately.

「 Then, what's the important matter? You fellows disappeared after leaving the capital. It seems that you guys operate only within the royal capital, huh... 」

「 Th-This is the matter. 」

The Knight straightened up and introduced himself as Sabnak. As of now still an inexperienced Knight,

concealed in Fukaroru on his own as an apprentice merchant.

「 Well, in the matter of Marquis, the target of my observation is Viscount Hagenti. Since you disappeared, there was a report distributed via messenger bird from the capital, to continue watching from here. 」

From the fact that a carriage was prepared for them, the person in charge of the tracking was going to have them followed while pretending to be a merchant in a mercantile caravan.

However, since the carriage was immediately stored, and horses were used in leaving the capital, the trackers were left in the dust.

Sabnak followed them, he acted as a lone pursuer since the concept of acting in a 2 or 3 person cell didn't seem to exist here. Like the incident with Pajou, she wasn't carrying weapons during surveillance. Was it normal for them to operate alone?

「 We don't have enough personnel. There are few applicants who wish to join the 3rd knights' corps, all the excellent applicants aimed for the Castle duty of the First Knight Corps, and any applicants who boast their strength picked the Second Knight Corps. 」

「 Generally only nobles can enlist for the Knight Corps. Being patient and stealthily mingling with the commoners makes the Third Knight Corps's job unpopular with the

nobles. But, the Second Knight Corps only takes action in the event of a crisis, and the First Knight Corps doesn't actually experience field work, so it is believed that the Third Knights Corps is the most useful in protecting the citizens. 」

「 ……So? 」

Sounding considerably annoyed, Hifumi shut Sabnak up with a single word.

「 What do you want? Your work is to monitor me, you're not supposed to make contact with me, else the Third Knight Corps' involvement will be revealed. 」

「 Ah, please excuse me…… 」

Sabnak just realized that he was

heated up, he bowed down while blushing.

Remembering the un-knightly attitude of Midas and Pajou, Hifumi's evaluation of them was "The Third Knight Corps is a gathering of strange fellows".

Sabnak who received instructions from the capital, turned towards the entrance in a hurry, but already in its place was spread a scene nothing short of a picture of a hell.

Sabnak who looked directly at the familiar tragically scattered corpses, threw up gastric juices, he then pulled himself together and started searching for Hifumi.

「Honestly speaking, I want to

capture Viscount Hagenti alive. There's also the confession from the Marquis. The Marquis issued instructions only to suck up profits. Specifically, we still don't know who's moving them and how.」

In reality, the one who caused the incident in the feudal town was Viscount Hagenti, who was part of the Marquis' faction.

As for the knight corps, according to princess Imeraria's instructions, thanks to Hifumi's actions they can push forward with an investigation unrelated to him, without restriction. He spoke honestly.

「I don't intend to bother or be hostile to you. To solve this matter and for Princess Imeraria to

peacefully govern this country, we would like to receive your cooperation. 」

Sabnak stood up and deeply bowed his head.

Sabnak recalled the corpses of the soldier he saw earlier. There are also an unbelievable number of reports related to Hifumi circulating from the capital. Its said that, anyone hostile to him, be they a king or noble will be killed without mercy. 10 members of the inner organisation were killed in a matter of seconds. Even without a weapon, he can lead knights by the nose bare-handed.

If one's words angers Hifumi, they will die where they stand. However,

in order to improve this country as a knight, they absolutely had to deal with this matter and to sweep the surroundings of the royal family, he gambled on Hifumi.

「 ..... I don't particularly mind. 」

At Hifumi's words, Sabnak raised his head.

「 The Viscount does not particularly matter to me, but to Origa and Kasha, he is someone they want to take revenge against. I will talk to them and decide later. 」

Immediately after saying that, Hifumi stood up and left.

The persuasion target having changed, Sabnak was completely

bewildered, not to mention the two slaves that were abruptly entrusted with the decision.

「 Ah-..... For now, could I have some tea? 」

Sabnak called the shop assistant to gloss over his red face while thinking 「 derailed! 」 embarrassedly.

Kasha could not help laughing.

「 Puu~.... Sorry, it's completely different from when you first called out to us. 」

「 No, it's fine. I practiced passing over the note several times at the back of the building while fired up. I had a small illness when I was younger, so I am a little unskilled at

these sudden things. 」(TN: due to his illness when he was young, Sabnak can't easily cope up with sudden changes in a situation and gets flustered easily.)

Sabnak said he was not good at meeting others for the first time. Being assigned here was also because few spies wanted to polish their skills alone in a different land.

「 I'm sorry, I'm rambling. Well, about the matter with the Viscount..... 」

「 Before that, could you tell me what information the Knight Order has on the Marquis' faction? In case the Viscount is let free, if any other enemy can be killed, I may consent. 」

Sabnak thought about Origa's words a little. 「To agree」or 「To not agree」.

The positions of nobles and slaves, leaving aside comparing them, the chances of them sitting at the same table were virtually nonexistent. However, Sabnak reminded himself that Origa and Kasha were slaves of the "Slender sword Knight". He felt an overpowering intimidation from Origa and Kasha, unthinkable of ordinary young women.

「..... I understand. Where shall I start explaining?」

After waiting for his tea, Sabnak began to speak.

At that time, Hifumi was aimlessly

wandering the streets of the town.

His katana casually hung on his waist.

「 I wonder what that is? 」

Towards the center of the town, there was a residence much larger than the ones surrounding it.

Slowly drawing near, several soldiers ran out of the strong looking metal gate.

The soldiers had ghastly appearances. Passing by Hifumi, they ran towards the town gate. Apparently, they were the response to the previous completely annihilated unit.

「 ..... So late. The guys watching

were quite some distance away. As I thought, there's probably another mode of information delivery. 」

Muttering to no one in particular, Hifumi approached the gate the soldiers had run out of.

「 ..... There's no guards on watch. 」

It appeared that all military personnel had completely left for the scene.

Hifumi entered in a stately manner, in spite of his amazement. The moment he placed his hand on the door of the mansion, he suddenly felt a sense of unease and jumped back from the door.

A loud sound rang out, the wooden

door fell to pieces.

Looking into the doorway that was suddenly well-ventilated, a face was seen.

「 The guy in the Marquis' mansion in the capital. If I recall correctly, your name was Strauss. 」

「 You remembered huh.... As I thought, I should have gotten rid of you back then... 」

There was a big hole from within the entranceway, Strauss fled back into the Marquis' Mansion while holding out a dagger followed by preparing to use magic.

Hifumi dodged without hesitation, and pulling back momentarily, ran around towards the side of the

building while silencing his footsteps.

「Getting away?！」

He ignored Strauss' husky voice and continued to run.

I could sense 10 people inside the building. Since Strauss is out here alone, is one of them the Viscount? So the remainder are the servants?..... No, I could sense someone on the second floor..... It's Tamuzu. Why is he here?

He remembered the young soldier that stood still as he watched all manners of death, the young soldier that was about to be killed by his colleagues.

Hifumi had an unpleasant hunch so

he looked up. At that instant, a maid who had opened the window to air the room saw him.

He jumped up, grabbed the edge of the window with his left hand, and slipped his body into the window at the last minute.

The maid was surprised and froze when he approached, she cracked a smile so he only gently hit the nape of her neck, knocking her unconscious.

I'm sorry that there are no beds.

He softly laid the maid's body down, and after confirming there was nobody else in the hallway he went into the room Tamuzu was located in.

He ran across the wooden floored hallway with considerable speed, you could only hear slight rustling of the clothes.

It's here.

Among the doors that lined the corridor, he stopped in front of the one that was particularly significant.

He could sense Tamuzu and another person behind it.

Unable to hear anything, he silently opened the door and peeked through the gap.

「.....I understand the report. All of the remaining personnel went out?」

「Yes. The Vice Captain lead all the remaining personnel and went towards the scene.」

Speaking to Tamuzu was a gentleman-like person with a refined voice. Peeking through the gap, the gentleman seemed to be in his 40's, wearing brand new clothes with embroidery that identified with the aristocracy. He took something off of the shelves in front of Tamuzu after hearing Tamuzu's report.

That's Viscount Hagenti over there huh..

「However..... Commanding officer Guzafan was an accomplice, it is deplorable.」

「Regrettable..... That's right, it's regrettable」

Hagenti took out a sword.

Holding the sword straight, it was 70cm long and had decorations for some kind of ceremony.

The Viscount having turned his back towards Tamuzu, gazed at the blade of the sword carefully while drawing it out.

「It's a serious crime. Many soldiers were lost. Well then, we should request a Knight's investigation here..... 」

Apparently, it seems Tamuzu is complaining to Hagenti because the ringleader of the evil deeds was the lead soldier. Moreover, he proposed

getting the country to intervene.

That guy is a fool.

The idea that they were Hagenti's instructions did not come to mind. That aside, would any noble inform the country of any blunder in their own territory?

「You」

Hagenti muttered in a low voice and further lowering it said

「If you'd stayed silent, this wouldn't have been necessary.」

Turning around, Hagenti thrust the sword. Tamuzu couldn't react in time.

Tamuzu collapsed after the sword

struck his stomach and looked up at Hagenti without being able to make a sound.

Hifumi slipped into the room while Hagenti was occupied with the collapsed Tamuzu.

When Hagenti noticed Hifumi's intrusion, that figure was already in front of him.

「Uoo！」

Hagenti slashed with the sword that he was holding in the spur of the moment, but it was too late.

A fist drove into the sword-brandishing Hagenti's solar plexus, his eyes turned white and fainted.

Hifumi looked at the fallen

Tamuzu, however it was too late. He was dead.

Hifumi noticed indications of something hidden behind Hagenti's writing desk, so he turned it over.

In a single beat, the painting that hung on the wall above was sliced.

Falling from the gash in the painting, scattering documents fell down.

Looking at the state of affairs, Hifumi nodded to himself.

「 Found it at last 」

Strauss had entered the room.

「 You're slow. The task here is done, you can entertain me. 」

Hidden in the shadow of the desk, Hifumi put away his katana and brought out his kusarigama.

「 It's over is it? Is Hagenti dead? 」

「 No. 」

Hifumi rose, leisurely swinging the chain, sickle in one hand.

「 We can still fight a little bit more. I'm letting him live for now 」

「 ..... It is regrettable that I withdrew before. By no means did I think you'd be a hindrance here. I should have killed you at that time 」(Strauss)

Strauss pointed his dagger at

Hifumi and began to chant quietly.

Hifumi continued swinging the fundou, the same as ever, without taking up any particular stance.

「 ..... Are you finally prepared? Die! 」

Though the wind blades attacked Hifumi, a gust of wind produced by the fundou dispersed their destructive force and disappeared.

「 What!!?? 」

Strauss had absolute confidence in his wind blade magic, he was unable to hide his surprise at seeing it so easily erased.

「 You bastard, what did you do! 」

「 As you can see, I waved my weapon. Like this, swoosh. 」

The chain was flourished as to show the fundou at the end of the chain.

「 As expected, if shown often, countermeasures can be prepared. Was I overconfident? However, there was no choice, it had to end. 」

Not just the fundou, the sickle section of the kusarigama was thrown, twining around Strauss's shaking arm, the sickle section embedded itself at the right shoulder.

Strauss lowered the dagger, Hifumi approached slowly and cautiously.

「 The wind can be blown in various directions, but the practical scope of using it is quite narrow. In the Marquis's estate, Pajou's shoulder had a shallow cut. Some time ago as well, not even the painting was sliced completely. Though the wind blades blowing may look frightening, the reality is that the opponent cannot be killed unless cut at the neck. 」

The true nature of Strauss' magic was seen through he was panicking while holding the dagger in his left hand. In addition he began to chant, but Hifumi was already in front of him.

「 Too slow. 」

Strauss got kicked in the face and

rolled over to the hallway.

You could see he had a nosebleed and was fainting in agony, then a woman's scream was heard.

「The magic my Origa uses can attack and carve out a desk from the floor. The speed of the attack is much faster」

He thumbed the guard of his Katana so it would be easier to draw.

「I think there is some good prospects in your body movement, but it is still impossible for you to stand before me.」

Hifumi slashed Strauss with a quickdraw while he was trying to get up.

Stepping forward firmly with his right foot, a sound was heard as Strauss's head began to fall from the torso.

In the hallway, there was a housemaid who witnessed the instance of murder, unable to move out of shock.

「 Hii-! 」

Frightened at seeing Hifumi approaching, she moved back, trying to escape unsuccessfully.

Sorry about that. Can you stand? 」

Afraid of being touched again, stopping at a suitable distance.

「 Gather everyone else in the hall. 」

「 This..... Yes, Un-Understood! 」

Standing up, the maid unsteadily ran to carry out Hifumi's instructions.

Shouldering the unconscious Hagenti and returning to his seat in the dining room, a little less than 30 minutes has lapsed since he'd left.

Though he had settled the entire matter alone, he anticipated what they were going to say.

「 There's the scent of a woman on you. What were you doing? 」

Hearing Origa's first words, he slipped.

Chapter 18: New Divide

Hifumi dropped Hagenti onto the floor, sat down and ordered tea from the waiter who was wearing a rather strained expression.

「 V-Viscount Hagenti..... 」
(Sabnak)

Seeing Hifumi casually toss the Viscount on the floor, Sabnak was speechless.

「 Did you kill him? 」

「 No, he's just stunned. 」

「 Is that so. 」

Seeing that Hifumi did not see the situation as out of the ordinary, Sabnak couldn't help but tremble.

The two women didn't think Hifumi's abduction of the Viscount in such a short time as wondrous. At this point, Sabnak completely understood the Princess' instructions of "Do not defy. "

「 Then, is your discussion finished? 」

「 To hell with that, what happened to Viscount Hagenti?! 」

「 Ah, I entered through the second floor window, killed the magician who was present and brought him. 」

Sabnak was unable to digest the

answer.

Disregarding Sabnak's lost expression, Hifumi explained.

「 ……Hm, that dagger wielding magician seems to be from the country Horant. 」

「 Pajou said something like that as well. 」

「 I have heard that the magicians from Horant do not use staffs, but daggers specially processed with magic as a medium. 」

Hifumi recalled that he had not learned about this country and its neighbours.

I will have Origa and Kasha teach me about it tonight, no, now that

this Knight is here, listening here is also fine. (Hifumi)

A man comfortably sitting and thinking, and a man in a daze; lying next to them, a tied up noble. Two women, discussing what to do about Hagenti. Unable to process what happened, the waiter took as much distance as possible and turned his gaze away.

「So, Before we get back to the story; about Hagenti. Do you want to kill him? Or hand him over to Sabnak?」

Hifumi wanted to eat something sweet, so he ordered something from the waiter, who brought him a peach like fruit to eat, and started listening to them once more.

.....So cute　(Origa)

Origa thought secretly, watching Hifumi peel and eat the fruit bit by bit to avoid getting his hands dirty.

Kasha memorised the sight, different from the way her master usually ate.

「 Well, what is it then? 」

「 Our enmity is with the merchant Beirevura. If you obtain information that leads to him, killing this man specifically is unnecessary. 」

Of course, Origa spoke after taking her master's permission.

「 Fuuun~ 」

「 Would you give me custody of

Hagenti himself? 」

Requesting earnestly, Sabnak bowed down once again. Hifumi accepted the request after he confirmed that there was no hesitation in Origa and Kasha's eyes.

「 I, I'm really thankful! 」

「 Instead of saying that, I want you to arrange a little something for me. You can think of it as compensation for my work. 」

After Hifumi finished eating the fruit, he prompted Sabnak to sit down and held up three fingers.

「 First, since the remaining soldiers rushed to the city gates to control the situation, I'm going to massacre them. I want a cleanup

crew. Second, there are two dead bodies in the 2nd floor of the Viscount's mansion that I left behind so, let me see..... 」

「 Master, is it in regards the magician from Horant? 」

「 Yes, I killed the magician and just left the body there. I want you to investigate him, because I saw that guy at the Marquis' mansion, Pajou too. 」

Sabnak wrote down Hifumi's demands on a piece of parchment. While writing the name 'Strauss', he remembered having seen the name before. Though Pajou's arm had been injured in the event, it had led to evidence of the Marquis's smuggling operation; this was a

well known fact within the Third Knight Corps.

No wonder, he was involved in that matter. I thought it was strange that the observing Pajou-senpai would be so valiant in those circumstances.　(Sabnak)

A vivid image of Hifumi charging the Marquis's estate while dressed as a senior Knight suddenly rose up in Sabnak's mind. He heaved a sigh of relief at it not being the case at the Viscount's estate.

「 And the third.....? 」

「 Tell me everything the Third Knight Corps knows about the state of affairs in this country and the neighbouring one. It will be

necessary to do so before going to Vichy. 」

「 ……Um, to what extent? 」

「 Everything. I had planned to travel carefreely and gather intelligence while touring the countries directly, but this seems to have become quite complicated. 」

Seeing Hifumi sigh while shaking his head, Sabnak resigned himself to simply accepting all this.

「 To tell the truth, I wanted to arrest the Viscount a little more smartly and secretly get things going in the background but……. Can't be helped, would you be willing to stay in town for a few days while I call for support? 」

「 Hmm, in that time you can give me all the information you have on.....Ah! 」

「 Master? What's wrong? 」

「 I told the Viscount's servants to gather in the hall..... 」

Seeing Hifumi's chagrined expression, Origa let slip a chuckle and turned to Sabnak.

「 Sabnak, could you go to the Viscount's estate in place of Master? 」

「 Eh, me? 」

「 Indeed, because if master goes, everyone is likely to be scared shitless. 」

Kasha agreed with Origa's proposal.

The annoyed Hifumi insisted that he had been gentle with the non-adversary maid, but no one believed him.

「 Got it, I will go. At any rate, putting the town in order is necessary. 」

「 Sorry about that. 」

Hifumi smoothly inclined his head at Sabnak who had stood up.

「 N-No, this too is my job! 」

「 Then, while Sabnak is going to the estate, are there other soldiers that need to be dealt with? 」

In the end, we still came back to a

topic that reeks of blood. (Sabnak)

Separating from Sabnak, Hifumi and the two returned to the town entrance. Five soldiers were cleaning up the corpses.

Coming to a halt a suitable distance away, Hifumi observed the working soldiers.

「 What do you think? 」

「 Kasha and I, just the two of us are enough to kill them with room to spare. 」(Origa)

..... I intended to ask them whether they wanted to kill or arrest, but... (Hifumi)

Was this girl always capable of such brutality? Hifumi was more

concerned about her, conveniently blind to his own character.

「 Well then, I'll leave it to you. 」

「 Leave it to us. 」(Origa)

「 Yoshi! 」(Kasha)

Seeing off the fired-up duo and watching them run towards the soldiers, Hifumi contemplated on how to deal with slaves.

「 Is this event beneficial as well, I wonder? 」

His calm eyes reflected the tragedy orchestrated by the two girls.

Several days after the event, Sabnak worked tirelessly; putting out an urgent request to the town guard to

monitor the comings and goings of adventurers, and cleaning of the blood and bodies was begun under the command of the temporary acting lord of the area.

Moreover, time flew when Hifumi visited the Viscount's estate everyday to ask Sabnak something or the other.

When Hifumi arrived, Kasha and Origa trained in the garden of the mansion, the employed servants were worried.

「 If I say not to come, would they refrain from training on the premises....? 」 (Sabnak)

「 Don't twist your words. If you're worried, say what you want to say

directly.」 (Hifumi)

「 Twist my words..... They are your slaves,yes? 」

「 Even if that's the case, without explicit instruction, they move yes? Telling them each and every move is tiresome. Anyway, because of the fights in town recently, I told them to let their hair down. 」

Fondness could be heard in Hifumi's voice.

Seeing his tender expression that contrasted with his everyday behaviour, and remembering his cheerful slaughtering of people, instead of amusement, Sabnak felt fear. He had never seen such a warped and selfish individual like

this before.

「 The slaves adore you. 」

「 I think I'd use a different word. Come now, continue your instruction. 」

Seeing Hifumi's expression while opening the map, Sabnak was moved by his desire to learn and unintentionally smiled.

The kingdom of Orsongrande, as the name implied, was ruled by nobles in a model similar to the feudal system. It varied in different places depending on the nobles in charge. Apart from the amount that had to be paid to the kingdom, it could be freely set by the lord of the area.

Though each lord had their own territorial army in addition to the Imperial army, in terms of both financial power and military forces, the Imperial family had overwhelming influence. Civil war did not seem to be a concern presently.

Only the northern side of the country faced the sea, it touched borders with other countries on the eastern, western and southern sides.

To the east was the merchant country, Vichy. The country was run by a parliamentary system in which several city-states were represented by representatives in an assembly. Being called the merchant country, the country itself sold metal and manufactured goods in

neighbouring countries, the profit formed a large part of the national budget. As a result, many city-states promoted commerce and industry. Incidentally, good quality metal could be excavated from it's southern mountainous area. A lot of dwarves lived there, so as to exchange and trade commodities made by the dwarves, it was a definite plus point.

The western side did not exactly have a clearly defined border, the vast mountainous region was filled with wilderness over which were spread many beastmen villages. The custom of farming being nonexistent, it was said they lived off hunting, but no details were known. Humans weren't interested, simply avoiding the race as a whole.

While Hifumi had heard they were “hostile to humans” when princess Imeraria had summoned him to “Fight the demi-humans”, Sabnak had a different story to tell. Orsongrande one-sidedly invaded to get more land and were hit hard by the guerilla warfare used against them, became impoverished and withdrew.

「 What a nonsensical affair. 」

「 Beyond the beastmen land, there is a country known as the Knight country, they too want the land in question. After all, in the mountainous and wild areas, ores and crystals can potentially be mined. Currently we have no choice but to one-sidedly buy them from Vichy. To escape from this

miserable state of affairs, the King seemed to have thought that that land was necessary.」

In a past story, the prince who succeeded did not have appropriate judgement either, instead, the princess ruling the country now did not seem to be interested in the conquest any more, thought the Knights.

「The south?」

「The magic country, Horant.」

A genius magician in Horant gathered apprentices to train and research for the country. Most of the magic tools produced by Vichy are designed by Horant. Also, making use of weapons like daggers

as a magic wand is known to some magicians, but the production methods are not released by Vichy.

On the west of Horant, sharing only a little bit of border with Orsongrande, is the country of elves.

「 Elves! Elves exist! 」

「 ..... Uh, yes. They exist, but meeting them is unlikely. 」

It is said that most of the elves' country is heavily forested, and the elves live quietly in the depths of the forest, not interacting with other countries. Any stranger entering the forest is immediately attacked mercilessly; Orsongrande and Horant have tried several times

to subjugate some of the forest, to no avail. Unfamiliar to forest warfare, with arrows unexpectedly flying in from the shadows among the trees, even the magicians could not fight properly, and had to retreat numerous times.

「 For the time being, these are the state of affairs of our country and it's neighbours. 」(Sabnak)

「 You saved my time. Thanks. 」

「 Ah, apart from that, could you come here tomorrow? 」

Listening to the tired-out Sabnak's reason, Hifumi smiled and stood up.

「 At last reinforcements have come from the capital. It seems that Pajou senpai will be here as well.

Regarding the man called Strauss, I believe she will give you the information directly. 」

「 Is that so..... Very well. 」

* * *

「 Gothras escaped. 」

Pajou, who seemed to have ridden in considerable haste, found Hifumi in the Viscount's mansion. Out of breath, she cut her greetings short and explained the situation.

According to Pajou's explanation, Gothras, who was awaiting punishment in the Knight Corps' prison, had killed a guard and disappeared.

「 The Knight who was guarding

him, his neck was snapped. The prison bars were bent, a feat of strength impossible for a human. 」

However, Pajou's place was broken into, and the report related to Hifumi was stolen. Gothras could not be working alone, he had to be receiving some guidance, was the conclusion the Knight Corps reached.

「 We believe that someone helped Gothras escape. 」

Regaining her breath, Pajou finished reporting and straightened her spine. She bowed deeply to Hifumi.

「 This incident was completely our blunder. You painstakingly gave us

an opportunity to clear up our mismanagement, we not only wasted it, but as a result you are deprived of information. The responsibility is mine. 」

Seeing her apologising with her head bowed and not moving an inch, Hifumi laughed.

「 The apology is unnecessary. Even if the information is concealed, sometime, somewhere, it will be revealed. Besides, there might be a guy holding enough power to bend prison bars, yes? 」

Looking up, Pajou's eyes met a cold smile, the same one she saw at the Marquis' estate. A chill went up her spine.

「 Ah, joy. A fellow confident in their physical prowess, there's this technique I really want to try out.... 」

Everyone froze seeing the expression of warped joy on Hifumi's face.

Chapter 19: Know Your Enemy

Hifumi had previously bought some magical tools that functioned like lamps. Separating from Pajou and heading back to the hotel, Hifumi continued learning his letters from Origa after dinner. Since he had made this a habit after coming to the town, he had a general grasp of the basic letters and their readings.

Incidentally, the magical illumination tool was at a great buy, being better than a candle. He bought a total of five pieces; one each was given to Origa and Kasha at the hotel.

The tutoring went somewhat like this: the letters were read aloud so so as to grasp their pronunciation. They were written in a horizontal fashion and repeated them aloud while writing helped memorising them.

Since constant repetition was a shortcut, though this method used up a lot of expensive parchment, Hifumi bought it regardless.

「 Master, is upto here sufficient today? 」

「 Hm, I understand the general characters and pronunciations from this. No words or grammar right now. If necessary, I will ask later. 」

「 Please leave it to me. Seeing

master's speed, it won't take too much time. 」

Kasha was carrying out her weapon maintenance during her free time. She watched the two get along quickly and felt a little lonely.

Should I mingle more with Hifumi? thought Kasha, but she didn't want to disturb Origa.

While Kasha was pondering these deep thoughts, all the while cleaning nonexistent marks on her sword, Hifumi had cleared up his study material and stood up.

「 Because of Pajou's troublesome state of affairs, we have to enter Vichy tomorrow. Since we're taking the carriage, I'll have to ask you two

to be the coachmen again. 」

「 Understood. 」 (Kasha)

「 Of course. 」 (Origa)

Hifumi nodded at their responses and retired to his room after breakfast.

Origa waited until the door to their room was completely closed and undressed facing her bed. A flimsy dress of rather thin material covered her slim body. Though it was usual for Origa to sleep like this, Kasha vaguely noticed her figure.

Slender arms and legs. She really does give off a “womanly” impression. (Kasha)

Understanding her master's kind treatment, Kasha sighed and tensed, gazing at her own arms and legs.

She sighed again.

「 What's wrong? 」

「 It's nothing. We have to leave early tomorrow, go to sleep. We're travelling with master, so it's definitely going to be a turbulent day. 」

Origa laughed gently in agreement and turned off the illumination tool.

The next morning, Sabnak was at the gate that faced Vichy to see off the trio.

A thin fog had come out, softening the morning light.

Though Sabnak was pleased at the arrival of the reinforcements, since all the Knights that came along were senior to him, the paperwork had not decreased even though he had an attendant helping him. The dark circles under his eyes kept thickening.

A man riding a horse and a carriage came from the direction of the hotel.

「 Good morning. Something wrong? 」

「 Just seeing you off. From here, continue along the highway for two hours till you reach the stronghold at the border. Since there are troops on both the Orsongrande and the Vichy side, please show the permit

to both. 」

「 Got it. Well then, see you. 」

Hifumi continued on, the horse-drawn carriage followed slowly in his wake, both slowly vanished into the mist covering the highway.

Sabnak continued staring for a while at the spot where they disappeared. Pajou's voice rang out from behind him.

「 Hifumi-san? 」

「 Now it's possible to leave this place.... Something wrong? 」 (Sabnak)

「 It's the incident of the magician from Horant, the one called Strauss. The analysis of his body, except for

the dagger, there was no indication of high social standing. However...
」

Visibly penetrating Strauss' chest was a magic tool, possibly of an evil goal.

Based on the build of the body, it seemed more than 50 years old and considerably thin. The movements displayed in the Marquis' mansion, as heard from Hifumi were hard to believe. Though not completely clear, it may have been a body strengthening type evil magic, surmised Pajou.

「 The corpse can be sent to the capital today for further investigation. 」

「 Body strengthening magic..... Could it be, the one that set Gothras free was Strauss? 」

「 No, the timings are wrong. 」

「 Then how... 」

「 Gothras might have used a similar magic tool, but he was frisked before being put into prison. Did someone pass it to him for him to escape? ..... In any case, it is necessary to search within the royal capital for this possible accomplice. 」

Even as she said this, Pajou was at her wit's end to even start looking for clues.

* * *

As the carriage rolled on in a leisurely manner, the fog gradually cleared up. The stronghold on the edge of the road came into view.

Seeing that the so-called demon seemed to have left already, Hifumi felt let down.

「 That's the border? 」

There were no walls or fences or such, the highway just ended at a 2-storey stronghold. Both sides had just one large building each, nothing else.

According to Kasha's explanation, if one left the highway, they are immediately attacked by monsters. As a result, it was unnecessary to build walls.

The central building functioned as a checkpoint for both countries. The large buildings on each side housed their respective border security soldiers. According to a treaty, 10 soldiers from each country could be assigned there.

Seeing the stronghold come into view, Hifumi had an uneasy feeling.

「 ..... It's too quiet. I can't feel any indications of a single person inside, much less 20. 」

「 Eh? 」

「 Arm yourselves immediately. I smell blood. 」

Kasha and Origa did not understand, but believing in Hifumi, did so instantly. Their reactions

were a result of constant training.

The carriage was stored, horses were dismounted.

Drawing nearer cautiously, several soldiers were visible on the ground in front of the stronghold.

The trio did not rush forward, carefully approaching the bodies.

「 This.... 」

Seeing the state of affairs, Kasha gnashed her teeth.

An inspection of the path leading to the stronghold showed soldiers lying dead everywhere on the stone pavement. At first glance, it was obvious that their limbs were pointing in strange directions,

completely motionless.

Amongst the bodies, some limbs were cruelly ripped off, exposing a gruesome sight.

「 Everyone.... Dead? 」

「 No, one person is alive. 」

Smoothly moving among the corpses, Hifumi crossed the border and crouched down near a fallen soldier.

「 Oy, get up. 」

A young woman, a soldier from Vichy, judging from the armour, lay facedown on the ground completely unresponsive. She had disheveled red hair in a berry cut.

「 As expected, she's dead. Master? 」

「 No, this fellow is uninjured. 」

While saying that, Hifumi took the woman's wrist and jabbed his finger at a vital point located on the thumb side of the wrist.

「 Adadadadadada!? 」

The female soldier jumped up because of the sudden acute pain, with teary eyes put some distance between her and Hifumi.

That agile movement was similar to a cat, but the teary-eyed wrist-rubbing didn't improve the impression.

「 Why did it fail?? 」

「 I know if you're dead or not even if I can't see you. 」

「 That doesn't explain anything! 」

「 I wasn't explaining. 」

To Hifumi's cold response, the female soldier clenched her teeth and placed her hand over a sword at her hip.

She made to draw her sword, but Hifumi was much faster. Instantly, Hifumi's katana was pointed at her grey left eye.

「 I have questions. Explain this situation. You die if not. 」

「 ..... Understood. 」

The girl, Alyssa, was an inspection official of Vichy. There seemed to be a constant number of women soldiers on the border.

「 This happened a little while ago. A powerful man suddenly started acting violently. The soldiers here and Orsongrande's too were instantly killed. I managed to survive because I played dead when a colleague was thrown against me and I fell. 」

Noticing that Alyssa spoke with a strangely lovely voice for a soldier, Hifumi assessed Alyssa with an expressionless gaze. Seeing he did not so much as raise an eyebrow at the mention of the Orsongrande soldiers being killed, Alyssa pouted.

「 Though your colleagues have died, you don't seem to be affected. 」 (Alyssa)

「 Doesn't matter. Leave that, what about the violent and powerful man? 」

「 That one. 」

Hifumi turned his gaze to a tall man grasping a thick bludgeon, collapsed on the ground.

「 Who killed him? 」

「 I don't know, while playing dead I had my eyes closed. However once everyones voices died out, I heard someone's footsteps approaching. I heard a voice say "Still lack control" and then the footsteps faded away. I saw neither the face nor the form.

」

「 I see. Origa, Kasha. Return to the town by horse and bring Pajou. 」

「 Understood. 」

Seeing Hifumi see the two off, Alyssa asked timidly,

「 Um.... the sword, could you- 」

She stopped mid-sentence when Hifumi returned his katana to it's sheath.

「 Th-thank you.. 」

「 If you have time to thank me, you have time to run. 」

「 Fue?! 」

Alyssa tilted her head in confusion on seeing him disregard her. Hifumi returned his katana to storage, replacing it with the kusarigama.

「 Wh-what..... 」

As Alyssa muttered that, the atmosphere grew heavy. A shadow rushed out from the stronghold towards Hifumi, with the intent to strike.

It was the escaped Gothras.

「 In the past few days you've become considerably sickening. 」

Hifumi sneered, easily avoiding the incoming fist.

Gothras' appearance was very dirty, to the extent that one would not

think he was a former Knight. A body bulging with swelled up muscles, drool dribbling down a face twisted in pain.

He grasped a weapon tightly, blood dripping from the fists.

「 Kill.... KILL... 」

「 He's lost his sanity huh. How boring. 」

While saying this, Hifumi had thrown the counterweight of the kusarigama, capturing Gothras' arm. Faced with the abnormal strength pulling the kusarigama, Hifumi easily let go of it.

「 Hm, brute force huh. Pretty good. 」

「 B-but the weapon! 」

Alyssa yelled at the carefree Hifumi's back.

Facing Gothras' barehanded second strike, Hifumi too was empty handed.

A simple head movement dodged the fist to the face. An elbow met the fist.

Bones were definitely broken, but Gothras continued his strikes without hesitation.

「 No sense of pain either eh. 」

Stepping some distance away in consideration for his opponent, Hifumi was wearing a huge grin.

Seeing that, Gothras attacked furiously, shouting incoherently.

A few palm strikes to Gothras' sides broke his ribs. Just that alone did not stop him, but a well-placed kick to the broken ribs did the trick. Gothras' movements noticeably slowed and he was throwing up blood, his internal organs seemed to have been damaged.

「 Pain and fear are valuable sensations. This guy has lost them, he's a boring opponent now. 」

Gothras's throat was crushed, courtesy a finger strike from Hifumi, a two-fingered strike to the eyes immediately followed. The onslaught was complete with a pulverizing kick to the now-prone

Gothras's chest.

Gothras trembled for an instant, his movements then stilled permanently.

「 ..... Amazing 」

Alyssa was unable to take her eyes off Hifumi.

Pajou and Sabnak arrived with Origa and Kasha just as Gothras died.

It seemed that a sentry in Fukaroru had seen someone resembling Gothras heading towards the border, and the report had made it's way to Pajou. Eventually, they had given chase, but overtaking a single fugitive was impossible on the highway.

「 This..... Sabnak, return immediately and bring soldiers immediately for emergency border security. And then send a report to the capital about this incident. 」

「 Roger. 」

Receiving Pajou's backing, Sabnak turned back immediately.

Hifumi briefly told her the situation, Pajou approached Gothras' corpse to inspect his equipment.

「 As expected, Hifumi-san is proactive..... In any case, this is a completely changed form of Gothras.... This is..! 」

On tearing off Gothras' shirt, there was a tool resembling the one on

Strauss' chest. However, the shape was a little different from Strauss'. There was a portion that had collapsed, a result of Hifumi's pulverising kick.

「 This thing, was it the cause? 」 (Hifumi)

「 I fear that is so, there was something similar on Strauss' chest as well. 」

「 In that case, there may be something like that there. 」

Hifumi was pointing at the corpse of the large man who was acting violently earlier.

While Pajou was looking at Gothras' corpse, Hifumi observed the large man's body. A magic tool

similar to that of Strauss and Gothras was slightly ensconced in the chest area.

In front of everyone, a hand was thrust into the large man's chest.

「 Uee~.... 」

Alyssa unintentionally squeaked, unable to look away.

「 Wh-what are you doing? 」

Kasha asked timidly, Hifumi wiped his hand on the large man's clothes and answered,

「 A thought came to mind. There is a wound reaching his heart. My strike was not the cause of death. 」

Hifumi turned his gaze to Pajou.

「 Judging by the shape and depth of the wound, It's probably a weapon like Strauss had, similar to the size of that dagger he had.... 」

Origa brought a cloth soaked in water from a nearby well for Hifumi to wipe his hand on.

「 Besides, Alyssa, this man seems to be an official from your side. 」

「 Ueh? H-how.... 」

「 That fellow's clothes have the same seal engraved in the handle of your sword. They are issue-only goods, yes? 」

「 That is.... 」

「 If you simply think about it, people from Horant have slipped

into both Orsongrande and Vichy for something, wouldn't you agree?」

Listening to his conclusion and the question that came to light, Alyssa and Pajou both began to understand the sheer weight behind it.

Credits

Translator: Trinity Archive / Infinite Novel Translations

Epub: Estevam / dotNOVEL